

July 17, 2006

# Afghanistan Freedom Watch

Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan



Oregon National Guard Soldiers  
take over CJTF-Phoenix mission  
Pages 8, 9



A C-17 Globemaster from Charleston Air Force Base, S.C., takes off from Bagram Airfield on July 4 while a C-130 Hercules from the Alaska Air National Guard waits to take the runway. C-17s bring supplies in and out of the combat zone while C-130s distribute supplies to U.S. and Coalition forces within Afghanistan via airdrop and air-land missions.

Photo by Air Force Maj. David Kurle, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs



Cover: Army Spc. Joshua Phillips checks a road outside Camp Phoenix during a recent foot patrol. Phillips is an infantryman assigned to Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, 41st Brigade Combat Team.

Photo by Army Pfc. Michael J. Nyeste  
19th Public Affairs Detachment

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## *Afghanistan* **Freedom** Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan **Watch**

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# Having good sun sense is no nonsense

**By Army Lt. Col. Nick Piantanida**  
**Task Force Centaur Flight Surgeon**

The role of the sun in human existence is well studied, yet continues to mystify the human mind.

The sun's UV rays are harmful. They do not just hit your skin and bounce off - UV rays, depending on the wavelength, penetrate the layers of skin and trigger a sequence of damaging reactions.

Ultraviolet radiation has three forms: UVA, UVB and UVC. Sunburn is most often attributed to UVB rays, but all can contribute to skin cancer. In fact, one in five Americans will develop some form of skin cancer.

UVA is 10 to 100 times more abundant than UVB, but is only 1/1000th as potent in creating skin redness. UVA penetrates more deeply into the skin than UVB and is capable of delivering more damaging effects with regard to skin aging (wrinkles) and cancer. UVC rays do not reach the earth's surface and present less of a threat.

Ultraviolet intensity and exposure are significantly affected by time of day, season and altitude. Maximal intensity occurs in the summer between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Interestingly, UVA is much less affected than UVB by the season or solar zenith angle. In early morning and late afternoon, a greater percentage of sunburn is due to UVA.

For each 1000-foot increase in altitude above sea level, there is approximately 4 percent increase in exposure to UVA and UVB. Therefore, activity between 5,000 to 10,000 feet above sea level (common in Afghanistan) will increase the exposure intensity by 20 to 40 percent.

Your best protection is to always wear sunscreen. Most sunscreens act by absorbing ultraviolet light. Sunscreen effectiveness is measured by a Sun Protection Factor (SPF). SPF is the ratio of the amount of time required to produce minimal sunburn through the application of a protective product versus no protection at all. In other words, a product providing 30 SPF means you can stay outdoors 30 times longer than without any sun block.

The SPF is usually measured without regard to sweating, water immersion, or sand and clothing abrasion. SPF products that are water resistant or waterproof, add the most favorable profile for sun protec-

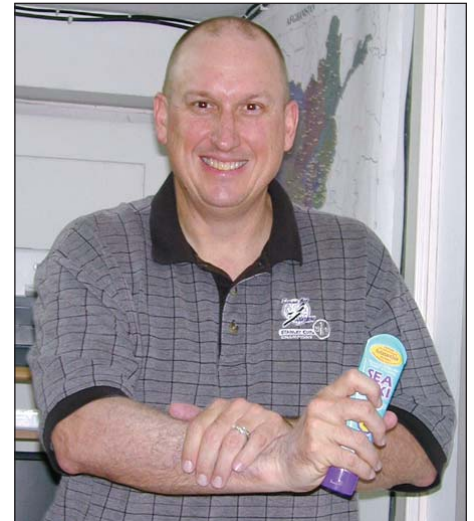


Photo by Army 2nd Lt. Khrysten Darm

**Air Force Master Sgt. Chris Miller applies a layer of sunscreen. Applying sunscreen is important to service members protecting themselves in Afghanistan's hot environment.**

tion durability.

Good sense equates to a ritual of skin care that applies SPF 30 UVA and UVB protection on a daily basis. Please address questions on this topic to your unit medical personnel.

## Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week



**Afghan cultural tidbit**

Photo by Army Pfc. Michael J. Nyeste, 19th Public Affairs Detachment

### Can you help me?.

#### Dari

Shoma ba man kumak karda mitawanid?

(Sho-ma ba-man ko-mak kar-da mi-ta-wa-nid?)

#### Pashtu

Tasi ma sara mrasta kawalay shai?

(Ta-se ma sa-ra mras-ta ka-wa-lay shay?)

**Afghan men sometimes wear a long tunic over baggy trousers and often wear a vest over the tunic. Turbans, traditionally white, but now of any color, are wound around the locally favored type of turban caps. Pashtuns and others who imitate them leave a couple of feet of turban cloth hanging down.**



# Germans bring modern medicine to Afghanistan

By Army Pfc.

Anna K. Perry

19th Public Affairs Detachment

KONDUZ, Afghanistan --

A soldier stepping into the new rescue center belonging to the German-run Konduz Provincial Reconstruction Team might believe they had somehow stepped right into another country.

"The facility is no different than a hospital you'd find in Germany in terms of quality or hygiene," said German Navy Doctor (Commander) Dirk Moellmann, commander, Konduz PRT medical corps.

The rescue center, whose primary mission is to provide medical support for International Security Assistance Force troops, not long ago consisted of tents and other mobile structures.

"We used to be located in a camp in downtown Konduz.

Now that we've moved the PRT to a new location, we have a permanent facility for our rescue center," Moellmann said.

The new center, which opened its doors May 24, provides a state-of-the-art working environment for medical personnel from Germany, Belgium and Romania.

The similarities to hospitals back home make it easier for the staff to work here. They are able to care for people with the utmost professionalism and meet the highest standards, Moellmann said.

In addition to aiding ISAF members, the medical team lends a helping hand to seriously injured Afghan patients.

The staff feels good about assisting people who would otherwise receive no medical attention, it keeps them motivated, Moellmann said.

No matter who the staff is



Photo by Air Force Tech. Sgt. John Cumper, Combined Joint Task Force - 76

**German, Belgium and Romanian hospital staff transfer an Afghan patient at the Konduz Provincial Reconstruction Team Rescue Center. The facility opened its doors May 24.**

caring for, they never lose sight of the importance of their mission.

It's very important that the troops who work on the PRT, who drive out every day for patrols, know if they are wounded, they'll be in the

finest hands possible, said German Army Capt. Philipp Geronne, a resident of the anesthesiologist department.

"I think knowing they have the best facility available helps keep up their motivation," Moellmann agreed.

## Enduring Voices

*How would you help the Afghan people if you could?*



**Navy Petty Officer  
3rd Class  
Peter Grzybek**  
Bagram Airfield

*"(By doing) my job. We give humanitarian assistance to the PRTs and FOBs in Afghanistan."*



**Army Master Sgt.  
Alfred Ramos**  
Bagram Airfield

*"I'd help them stand on their own two feet through education so they provide themselves a future."*



**Air Force Senior  
Airman  
Steven Cherry**  
Bagram Airfield

*"Illiteracy is their biggest problem. Give them an education so they can know more about the world around them."*



**Army Spc.  
Mike Blancato**  
FOB Farah

*"Teach them the skills and the traits so they can build up their own system and infrastructure."*

# New road offers gateway to optimism

**By Air Force Capt.  
Joe Campbell**  
*Panjshir Provincial  
Reconstruction Team*

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** -- The U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID, started a \$16 million road project that extends from the center of the Panjshir Valley and will eventually connect the valley to southern markets in Charikar and Kabul. Construction on the 47-kilometer paved road began last June and is scheduled for completion by the end of this year.

To supplement the USAID

project, the Coalition is using its Commander's Emergency Reconstruction Program, or CERP, funding to extend the road approximately 20 additional kilometers down the main valley floor at a cost of \$2.8 million.

While the physical remoteness of the Panjshir Valley has created a secure, tight-knit society, its ancient seclusion has also served as an economic hindrance; that is, until now.

Turkish engineering company, Entes, is contracted to complete the road, and more than 300 Afghans were hired to help build it.

Historically, the natural barriers that isolate the people of the Panjshir Valley from neighboring communities also offers inhabitants a tactical sanctuary.

More than 25 years ago, the Panjshir mujadeen used the northeastern Afghan territory as an environmental fortress to stave off the Soviets, and more recently residents used the terrain to help prevent the infiltration of Taliban extremists.

"Economically, local Afghans are emphatically optimistic about the commercial links this road will provide," said Fletcher Burton, director of the Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team. "Politically, it helps demonstrate the Coalition's commitment to reconstruction in Afghanistan. Socially, it helps expose the Panjshir people to other cultures."

Burton said the road project is the single biggest agent of change right now in Panjshir, which became its own province in April 2004.

"The construction crew is laying about a half-kilometer of blacktop per day," he said. "And they'll need to make that

kind of progress to meet our December deadline."

Local optimism for the road project was apparent when all shopkeepers in the valley volunteered to tear down their storefronts to allow for the 6-meter-wide road.

"USAID doesn't compensate shopkeepers for rebuilding their storefronts," Burton said. "They understood the road needed to be 6 meters wide, so they happily cleared the way for progress because they understand the benefits. The new road replaces a centuries old donkey path."

According to Dr. Dianna Wuagneux, the USAID development advisor to the Coalition, two important factors contribute to the success of the Panjshir Valley road project.

"Security in Panjshir is very good, which allows the construction crew to make rapid progress," she said. "Also, local Afghans in the area support USAID and Coalition efforts, and cooperation from their leaders is very important in helping bring infrastructure to the people."



Photo by Air Force Tech. Sgt. John Cumper, Combined Joint Task Force - 76

**Construction equipment adds a layer of crushed rock over tar as foundation for the Panjshir Valley road. The construction crew is creating an all-weather surface.**

## Afghan citizens assist Coalition forces, dispose of IEDs

**Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan  
Public Affairs**

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** -- Afghan authorities and civilians working with Coalition forces, disarmed four improvised explosive devices in separate locations across Afghanistan on July 8.

A group of 50 Afghan civilians from the Gorumbay village in the Khost (Matun) District of Khost Province captured three extremists attempting to place two IEDs.

The group turned the extremists and the IED materials over to Afghan National Police at a nearby checkpoint. The ANP

forces disarmed the devices.

A dump truck, rigged as a vehicle-borne IED, was discovered in the Jalalabad District of Nangarhar Province. The truck had explosives attached on both sides and near the fuel tanks. ANP secured and cordoned off the area. A Coalition explosive ordnance disposal team disabled and removed the explosives.

In the Nika District of Wardak Province, ANP discovered an IED in a girls' school. A Coalition explosive ordnance disposal team disabled and removed the weapon and destroyed it in a safe location.

"The involvement of Afghan civilians in these incidents serves to highlight the communities' intolerance for extremist activity," said Lt. Col. Paul Fitzpatrick, Combined Joint Task Force - 76 spokesman. "More and more, average citizens are showing their disapproval of the extremist's violent and brutal methods and are assisting Coalition and Afghan security forces in defeating the insurgent threat."

The Coalition deeply appreciates Afghan citizens identifying and locating IEDs and applauds the bravery of the residents of Gorumbay village of Khost Province.



# Multiple nations provide security, stability in Konduz

**By Army Pfc. Anna K. Perry**  
**19th Public Affairs Detachment**

**KONDUZ, Afghanistan** -- Just as math and science courses are a prerequisite for a college degree, a safe and secure environment is a prerequisite for the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan.

The mission of the German-led Konduz Provincial Reconstruction Team is to provide that secure environment for the Northern provinces of Takhar and Konduz while supporting the local government in re-building their country.

The PRT is an integrated institution of the military components and the federal government of Germany, said German Army Lt. Col. Stephan Leistenschneider, PRT chief-of-staff.

"I think it works quite well," he said. "The civilian ministries provide us with assets like police officers for (Afghan National Police) training, political advisors and monetary assistance for reconstruction efforts."

The military components have resources like engineers, psychological operations and, of course, they provide force protection, he added.

Additionally, personnel from Belgium, Hungary, the Netherlands, Romania,



Photo by Army Pfc. Anna K. Perry

**A German patrol returns from a mission at the Konduz Provincial Reconstruction Team. The German-led PRT has increased the number of their patrols due to a surge in enemy activity.**

Switzerland and the United States lend support to the PRT.

"All of these countries help us do a better job, for example, the Belgium's explosive ordnance division is the best we have in Europe. And the Americans links us to (the U.S. Agency for International Development)," said German Army Col. Hans Patzki, PRT commander.

A recent surge in enemy activity has caused all of the nations to change the

way they carry out missions in the area.

"We are not sitting like lame ducks in the camp. Soldiers are out in the field around the clock, giving the bad guys no time for rest," Patzki said.

The PRT will continue to help the people of Afghanistan build a safe, stable environment free from Taliban influence. No amount of attacks will deter these troops from accomplishing their mission, he added.

## Afghan, Coalition forces wipe out extremist safe haven

**Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan Public Affairs**

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** – Afghan national security forces and Coalition troops conducted a raid on a known extremist compound July 10, killing more than 40 extremists in the Tarin Kowt District of Uruzgan Province.

The combined ANSF and Coalition forces engaged enemy fighters with small arms and joint fires after receiving small-arms and rocket propelled grenade fire from extremists hiding in the compound located in the village of Dehjaws-e Hasenzay, 10 kilometers north of Tarin Kowt.

One ANSF soldier was killed and three Coalition members received injuries in the battle. The wounded troops were

the successful raid.

The enemy frequently used the compound as a sanctuary to conduct operations against

**"Those (insurgents) we target -- especially ones liked those killed today -- have been directly linked to deliberate targetting of innocent Afghan civilians..."**

**Army Lt. Col. Paul Fitzpatrick**  
**CJTF-76 Public Affairs Officer**

medically evacuated to a nearby treatment facility and are listed in stable condition.

There were no reports of Afghan civilian injuries during

local Afghans, government officials and Coalition forces.

"We will continue to hunt down extremists operating in southern Afghanistan," said Lt.

Col. Paul Fitzpatrick, spokesman for Combined Joint Task Force – 76. "Those we target — especially ones like those killed today — have been directly linked to deliberate targeting of innocent Afghan civilians, non-government agency personnel, and Afghan government officials."

Afghan and Coalition forces continue to make steady progress in eliminating extremists throughout southern Afghanistan, killing or capturing large numbers of enemy fighters and advancing progress, peace and economic development to the people of Afghanistan.

# JLC commander commissions son from half a world away

**By Army Sgt. Michael Taylor**  
**Joint Logistics Command**

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** - Army Col. Larry D. Wyche, commander of the Joint Logistics Command here, commissioned his son and two other officer candidates into the Army as second lieutenants during a video teleconference June 15.

The officer candidates, David E. Wyche, Chad E. Leitzke and Donald K. Coleman, were commissioned by the elder Wyche immediately after graduating from officer candidate school at Fort Benning, Ga.

Wyche, who was joined by the JLC's Army Command Sgt. Maj. Brian Connie,

started the VTC by letting Connie pass some words of wisdom to the candidates from the enlisted side of the house.

Connie spoke to the men about empowering subordinates, trusting non-commissioned officers, keeping relationships professional, assigning tasks, asking questions

and not being too hard on themselves. Following Connie's words, Col. Wyche addressed the candidates.

"Always do the right thing," he said. "You will find a lot of temptations out there and you may find yourselves in situations where

your integrity will be questioned. Just do the right thing."

The colonel then spoke of treating every-

one from the lowest ranking private to the president of the United States with dignity and respect. He also spoke of fallen comrades, and how the lives of many soldiers will be in their hands.

"Your sole purpose in life is to make sure your Soldiers are trained and ready to go to war and win," said Wyche. "Never take that lightly."

"If you put a Soldier on a plane or a boat to go to war, then you are obligated to do everything in your power to try and bring them back home to their families and loved ones," Wyche said. "You may not always bring everyone home, but as long as you can look in the mirror and know that all of your Soldiers had all of the training and equipment you could give them, then that is all anyone can ask."

After speaking with the candidates, Wyche gave the three men their oath of office, officially commissioning them as second lieutenants in the U.S. Army.

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**"If you put a Soldier on a plane or a boat to go to war, then you are obligated to do everything in your power to try and bring them back home to their families and loved ones,"**

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*Army Col. Larry D. Wyche*  
*Joint Logistic Command commander*

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Photo by Air Force Senior Airman Jessica Johnson

## Fuel for the fight

An A-10 Thunderbolt II from the 442nd Fighter Wing gets fuel from behind a KC-135 Stratotanker while on a combat mission over Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.





Photos by Army Pfc. Michael J. Nyeste

**Army Brig. Gen. Douglas Pritt, left, commander of the 41st Infantry Brigade, holds his unit's colors and watches as it's unrolled, signifying that the 41st Infantry Brigade has assumed command of Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix V at Camp Phoenix on July 4.**

## Oregon National G

**By Army Pfc. Michael J. Nyeste  
19th Public Affairs Detachment**

**CAMP PHOENIX, Afghanistan** -- The 41st Infantry Brigade assumed command of Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix V during a transfer of authority ceremony here on July 4.

"Today we accept the authority to perform what we believe is one of the most important missions in the world's fight against terrorism," said Army Brig. Gen. Douglas Pritt, commander of the 41st Infantry Brigade, Oregon National Guard, during his speech at the ceremony.

The ceremony began with the Afghan National Army band playing both the U.S. and Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's national anthems.

Following the anthems, Army Brig. Gen. Mitch Perryman, commander of Task Force



(Left) Army Spc. Patrick Silva, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team walks by what could be puddles of paint, dye or chemicals on the side of a road just outside Camp Phoenix during a foot patrol following the transfer of authority ceremony at Camp Phoenix.

(Below) The Afghan National Army band plays "The Army Song," concluding the transfer of authority ceremony where the 41st Infantry Brigade assumed command over Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix V.



# Guard assumes Camp Phoenix mission

Phoenix IV and the 53rd Infantry Brigade, Florida National Guard, gave a speech to incoming and outgoing Soldiers. He commemorated the hard work and efforts of his Soldiers and expressed confidence and enthusiasm in the abilities of the 41st's Soldiers to accomplish their mission with excellence.

"Each member of the task force knew that this was our time, this was our task, and that our shared cause was and remains worth fighting for," Perryman said. "These warriors performed with honor, valor and distinction. Today we pass the responsibility of this mission to Brigadier General Douglas Pritt and the capable members of the 41st Infantry Brigade and Task Force Phoenix V."

Following his remarks, Perryman approached his unit's colors and held them

until they were cased. This signified the end of the 53rd's tour and the accomplishment of a their mission.

Once the 53rd's colors were cased, it was announced that Pritt and the 41st Infantry Brigade now assumed command of Combined Task Force Phoenix V.

Pritt then approached his cased colors and then watched the colors were unfurled, ushering in a new era for the 41st Infantry Brigade and Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix V.

Pritt then told Soldiers they have officially assumed responsibility for the mission.

"We accept this mission with enthusiasm and pledge our complete commitment to continue the legacy of excellence established by the 53rd Infantry Brigade and Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix IV," Pritt said.



**Army Brig. Gen. Douglas Pritt, delivers a speech at the TOA ceremony. Pritt is the commander of the 41st Infantry Brigade.**



# Soldiers provide security, stability in Kabul

By Army Pfc.

Michael J. Nyeste

19th Public Affairs Detachment

## CAMP PHOENIX,

**Afghanistan** -- The security and stability of Afghanistan is one of many mission objectives for Soldiers here, not only for the Afghan people, but for their fellow Soldiers as well.

Members of the 41st Brigade Combat Team perform foot patrols in the surrounding areas of Camp Phoenix on a daily basis to ensure the safety of Afghans in the community and their fellow Soldiers.

"We look for anything that's out of place and doesn't look right," said Army Spc. Patrick Silva, alpha team leader for Alpha Company 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, 41st Brigade Combat Team.

Hours before Alpha Company went outside camp Phoenix on a recent foot patrol, two explosions happened in the nearby area.



**Soldiers on a recent patrol discovered what could be a piece of live ordnance.**



Photos by Army Pfc. Michael J. Nyeste

**Army Sgt. Justin Doren checks to make sure all of his Soldiers have all of their equipment and supplies for an upcoming foot patrol. Doren is a squad leader for Alpha Company 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry Regiment, 41st Brigade Combat Team.**

Allegedly, one set of explosives was either strapped on, or transported by a donkey. Also, before leaving the gate, the Soldiers heard small arms

fire being shot at a military air plane landing in nearby Kabul International Airport.

Armed with the knowledge of these events in mind, all eyes were focused on anything the enemy might use to bring them harm.

"My first priority is to make sure all of my Soldiers come home safe and sound," said Army Sgt. Justin Doren, squad leader with A Co., 1-186 Inf. Doren says he has no doubts his Soldiers will accomplish the mission of keeping themselves and other coalition service members safe.

"I have 100 percent confidence in my team," Doren said. "The training we had was difficult, and it prepared us for what we have to do here."

In addition to providing security for themselves and their fellow coalition service members, they also have the

mission of keeping the areas surrounding Camp Phoenix safe for local Afghans and build strong, friendly relationships with them.

"We want to have a good rapport with these people," Doren said. "When you have radical groups preaching every day that the U.S. is evil, it's important that we show what we really are to them. To show them that Americans, for the most part, are very giving people."

Putting themselves in constant danger to keep other service members and local Afghans safe provides a sense of purpose for members of the 41st Brigade Combat Team.

"It feels important to be here," Doren said. "It's important that we do our job well, and win over the hearts and minds."



# Germans keep Afghan population informed

By Army Pfc. Anna K. Perry  
19th Public Affairs Detachment

**KONDUZ, Afghanistan** -- The words “psychological operations” often bring the word propaganda into the minds of service members, many times bringing a negative connotation to the mission of Psychological Operations units.

Propaganda is the farthest thing from the mind of German Army Maj. Hagen Messer as he carries out his duties as Chief of PsyOps in northern Afghanistan's German-run Konduz Provincial Reconstruction Team.

“Our mission is to provide the local population with reliable information to build a trustworthy environment...we don't use lies or half-truths,” said Messer, who is assigned to PsyOps Battalion 950 from Koblenz, Germany.

The team cannot afford to mislead people because they would lose all confidence and support for the PRT and the International Security Assistance Force mission, agreed Belgium 1st Lt. Serge Vanhoutte, tactical PsyOps team leader for the Belgium PsyOps support element in Konduz.

The spreading of reliable information, which can be everything from local news to explanations of the PRT's missions, is a project that involves many people. “Initially, we have scientists, historians and psychologists in Germany who pro-



Photo by Army Pfc. Anna K. Perry

**Ajmal Mawen Zadah, an Afghan tailor employed by the German-led Konduz Provincial Reconstruction Team, reads the International Security Assistance Force newspaper during a break from his duties.**

vide us with information necessary for campaign work, like understanding the customs and traditions of the people. We cannot do anything wrong or the project will fail,” Messer said.

Once a campaign is slated, the PsyOps team relies on their print and broadcast sections to get the word out through the PRT's radio station and newspaper, as well as through various other print products like leaflets, handbills, posters and stickers. Both sections have locally

employed editors who create products in Dari and Pashtu.

After products have been distributed, the tactical PsyOps teams gauge the effectiveness of the campaign in ways like face-to-face communication, polling teams and focus groups.

“Everyone involved in this mission is important because we are letting the Afghans know we aren't here to occupy their country...we are here to help and support them,” Vanhoutte said.



## PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

**Soldiers from the 277th Aviation Support Battalion rigger team sling load a tricon to a CH-47 Chinook during a mission conducted in Kandahar, Afghanistan. The mission was in support of Operation Mountain Thrust.**

Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Luis Rodolfo Heredia

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to [freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil](mailto:freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil). Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.

# Medic provides shoes for local Afghans

**By Army Sgt. Cynthia van Geete**  
**Task Force Falcon Public Affairs Office**

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** - We've all heard the expression "to walk a mile in someone else's shoes." But what if that someone else isn't wearing any? That is the problem Army Pfc. Jacob Birkholz is trying to address for local Afghan children.

Birkholz, a Task Force Falcon medic, routinely makes trips to the Egyptian Hospital here to help out wherever he can. While there, he noticed the extreme poverty a lot of the children live in.

"We brought candy one time, and the kids went nuts for it," he said. "So I thought, maybe next time I come, instead of bringing candy, I can bring something that is better for them."

Looking through his belongings, Birkholz came across a pair of serviceable running shoes that he no longer wore. Thinking that someone else might be able to use them, he brought the shoes with him the next time he visited the hospital.

"The shoes were snapped up in a hurry, so I thought, hmm...shoes seem to be useful," said Birkholz, from Lowell, Wyo. "I come from a large family, so I know there are a lot of secondhand shoes float-



Photos by Army Sgt. Cynthia van Geete

**An Afghan family picks out shoes at the Egyptian Hospital here. Army Pfc. Jacob Birkholz and his family collected more than 700 pairs of shoes to donate to local Afghans.**

ing around my house."

Birkholz called home and asked his mother, Peggy Birkholz, to send his old shoes to him.

When she heard why he wanted them, she decided to do some research on the Internet. Birkholz found an article about a child in Kabul who had his foot amputated because of an infection that could have been prevented if he had worn shoes.

When she read that, Mrs. Birkholz knew she could do better than just sending her son's old shoes.

Getting together with her daughters' church group, Birkholz organized a community shoe drive. She and the children collected 790 pairs of shoes in just two weeks before switching their efforts to fundraising so they could mail the boxes.

"I received five boxes of shoes within a month of calling home," Birkholz said, "and I'm still expecting another six or seven more to arrive."

Birkholz took the first shipment of shoes down to the Egyptian Hospital, whose security team helped him set up a table and pass out shoes to patients as they left the compound.

"It was a little chaotic at first," he

explained, saying there is such a need that when he first put out the shoes, everyone tried to grab as many pairs as they could.

Since then, the security team has worked with him to allow only a few people to come through the area at once.

"Two or three Egyptian soldiers help me set up the shoes on a table near the exit, then they go and pick out children they think the shoes will fit," said Birkholz. "They come through and pick up shoes on their way out. It helps get rid of the mob mentality."

Birkholz only brings about 50 pairs of shoes each time to avoid rioting. He visits the hospital twice a week, and has already handed out nearly 200 pairs of shoes.

He said he is glad to be helping out the locals in any way he can.

"If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem," Birkholz explained. "You have to be proactive." "It validates our purpose in being here," he continued. "I'm not a front-line Soldier, so I don't really see first-hand what U.S. forces do here. Giving out the shoes kind of brings me to my own front line; it puts me where the action is, and allows me to see the direct impact of what I do."



**Army Pfc. Jacob Birkholz, a Task Force Falcon medic, arranges shoes to give away to local Afghans.**



# Where's the BEEF?

## Bagram construction unit builds better bases

**By Air Force Maj. David Kurle**  
*455th Air Expeditionary Wing*  
*public affairs*

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** - The more than 10,000 people deployed here may not have heard of the 755th Prime BEEF engineers, but nearly all have benefited from their work.

For six months, the Base Engineer Emergency Force, deployed from Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan, has not only kept Bagram in the fight against extremists, but has made life better for the base's residents.

Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Michael Irons, superintendent for the 55-person engineering team, credits his Airmen for the huge amount of work done in Afghanistan during the unit's deployment.

"It's the E-6s and below who made this happen over here," said Irons. "They have really accomplished an amazing amount in the time they've been here."

The 755th Prime BEEF team deployed in January for an "in-lieu-of" mission, which means Airmen fill a requirement normally done by U.S. Army Soldiers. While the team reports to the 755th Expeditionary Mission Support Group, which manages the Air Force's in-lieu-of missions in Afghanistan, the engineers work on projects assigned by the Army.

From constructing living quarters, called "B" huts, to improving more than 25 miles of roads, to expanding dining facilities to finishing electrical and plumbing jobs, the 755th Prime BEEF has completed or started numerous projects.

"We definitely made people's lives better, especially here in Bagram," said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Todd Anderson, in charge of the electricians on the team.

As the team gets ready to re-deploy and turn their efforts over to a new group of Prime BEEF engineers, the Airmen know they have made an impact not only at Bagram, but around Afghanistan.

"Last month, they sent some of us to



Photos by Air Force Maj. David Kurle

**From left, Airman 1st Class Derek Schmidt, Senior Airman Jayson Hernandez and Airman 1st Class Steven Land, electricians for the 755th Prime BEEF engineers at Bagram Airfield, wire an outdoor light fixture.**

Forward Operating Base Gardez to make four sea huts for the Army," Anderson said. "They were very appreciative because we provided a larger chow hall. We're giving a better life to people who are deployed."

The team constructed 12,000-square-feet of living and dining space for Soldiers at Gardez.

"Gardez was probably the most challenging because of what we went through to get supplies to them," Irons said. "It's in the middle of the mountains, so everything has to go by truck."

Staff Sgt. Todd McAda, a structures craftsman, said the team had to raise the ground seven to eight feet to level the building site before construction.

"This is the first time any of us had built this large of a structure at a forward operating base," McAda said.

The team was short on construction specialists for the project, so Airmen from other specialties, such as plumbers,

pitched in and helped do a lot of the building, according to McAda.

"We had 19 of the best workers you could have, even though they weren't construction specialists" he said.

Another recently-completed project was a 10-foot wide sidewalk that runs the length of Bagram's main thoroughfare. The Prime BEEF team cleared the ground for the sidewalk then managed the contract for a local company to lay down the pavement.

The team also practiced diplomacy during their deployment, teaching Afghans how to operate newly-acquired heavy equipment.

One of Prime BEEF's last projects was re-wiring the electrical service to a field hospital run by the Egyptian military. A lot of the exterior lighting consisted of bare light bulbs hanging by an electrical wire over the tents that make up the hospital complex.

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# With 'Afghan First,' everyone wins

By Army Sgt. Victoria Willoughby  
345th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO, Afghanistan** -- Maj. John C. Calhoun, head of contracting for Regional Contracting Center Salerno, met with local Afghan business owners at the Civil Military Operation Center in Khost during a Vendor Day held as part of the "Afghan First" program.

Vendor Day was attended by 42 business owners who were selected by Nuerab Amirzai, the Chamber of Commerce director for Paktika and Khost Province, and who had not previously done business with the U.S.

"We wanted to be able to engage new businesses in the area to help them in the community," said Calhoun. "Mr. Amirzai selected reputable, responsible businessmen who had not yet had the opportunity to work with us."

The U.S. works with many Afghan businesses that provide a variety of supplies and services to the Coalition.

Vendor Day is an opportunity to share information so that more Afghans are educated on way to be competitive with their businesses, and it provides a larger vendor base for business, said Calhoun.

"The goal is to collect business names, capabilities and contact information so we can have more competitive Afghan businesses," he said. "We hope to increase the number of vendors that provide goods and services."

Vendor Day discussed commonly procured services and supplies and provided an overview of the entire contracting process. Attendees were educated on how to receive a request and prepare, submit a quote, and the evaluation and selection process of awarding contracts.



Photo by Army Sgt. Victoria Willoughby

**Local Afghan business owners, specially chosen by the Director of the Chamber of Commerce for Khost and Paktika province, gather to attend a business meeting to learn how to conduct business with the United States government at the Civil Military Operations Center here.**

Other topics included delivery of products, invoicing, payment, and making a proposal request and the session concluded with professional business relationships and ethics.

"Our policy is to go Afghan businesses first to try and build up their economy," said Air Force Tech. Sgt. Christopher J. Malley, contracting non-commissioned officer with the 96th Contracting Squadron, Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. "They may not be able to provide us with everything, but we will always try to go to them first."

The benefits of buying supplies from local Afghan businesses will bolster the economically and supplies will arrive faster than shipping them in from somewhere else, said Calhoun.

"We would much rather take the money we're allotted to support the operation and spend it here, than spend it in the states," he said.

In order to promote the number of

contracts awarded to local nationals, the Joint Contract Command Iraq-Afghanistan set a goal for the theater to award 75 percent of all contracts to Afghans.

"We do a good job of that," said Calhoun. "Last month, 91 percent of our total dollars at Regional Command Salerno went to Afghan companies. We award about 90 contracts each month worth about \$4 million. We have surpassed the theater goal, but we want to continue to increase those numbers to the maximum extent possible."

"It's great to find more vendors for the Coalition to do business with, and to teach Afghans how to do business with us," said Malley. "It's really a win-win situation because we're getting supplies faster and a bigger variety of services offered and Afghanistan is prospering because opportunities are getting spread around to more people that will help to fuel their economy."

## BEEF, from Page 13

With bare bulbs touching the fabric of the tents, the potential for a fire was very , according to Senior Airman Phillip Esmeli, an electrician working on the hospital project.

"We're improving the lighting for everyone and eliminating the fire hazards," Esmeli said. "When we got here, I was amazed at the wiring. I didn't even know anyone could do that."

He said it felt good working

this kind of a job, and it was satisfying because they gave them something they really needed.

Attitude is everything when working projects, especially in the extreme hot and cold weather of Afghanistan,

according to Irons.

"Their attitudes have been super," he said. "They've overcome every obstacle put in their path. Nothing was ever handed to them that wasn't completed, usually ahead of schedule."



# British military officers ride motorcycles for Afghan charity

**By Air Force Capt. Joe Campbell**  
*Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team*

**PANJSHIR PROVINCE, Afghanistan** -- Two British military officers are riding motorcycles from Afghanistan to Germany to raise money for a charity benefiting Afghans with birth defects and those injured by land-mines.

British Army Lt. Cols. Felix Gedney and Gary Bateman are riding from Kabul to Monchengladbach to raise awareness and money for the Sandy Gall Afghanistan Appeal charity. The organization provides artificial limbs and mobility aids for Afghan patients, primarily landmine victims, according to the agency's Web site.

"We had our motorcycles crated and shipped to Kabul on a plane for this event," said Gedney.

Each man is riding a 600cc Yamaha Tenere dirt bike that has been specially equipped and loaded with spare tires, tools and other essential items for the journey.

After routes were mapped, motorcycles equipped, passports and visas prepared, the adventurers began the first day of their trek June 30 leaving behind Kabul. Many well-wishers turned out to see them off on their 4,300 mile expedition.

"We expect it to take us five or six weeks to reach our destination," said Bateman as the pair and their support crew visited members of the Panjshir



Photos by Air Force Tech. Sgt. John Cumper

**British Army Lt. Cols. Felix Gedney (left) and Gary Bateman are riding from Kabul, Afghanistan to Monchengladbach, Germany to raise awareness and money for the Sandy Gall Afghanistan Appeal charity.**

Provincial Reconstruction Team.

The crew stopped at the PRT's safe house and communication site for a comfort break as the two made their way up the Hindu Kush mountain passes toward Tajikistan.

The support team dropped off well south of the Anjuman Pass on July 1 when they were no longer able to traverse the road which turns to little more than goat trails.

Individuals interested in making a donation or tracking the progress of Gedney and Bateman may do so at

[www.longwayhome.org.uk/](http://www.longwayhome.org.uk/).

For more information on the Sandy Gall charity, log on to [www.sandygall-safghanistanappeal.org](http://www.sandygall-safghanistanappeal.org).

The multi-service Panjshir PRT includes various military specialties from a Navy engineer to Army Civil Affairs Soldiers to Air Force security, services and transportation specialists. The team's mission is to help extend the reach of the Afghan government through regional reconstruction projects, and enhance security and stability through mentoring and outreach programs.



**British Army Lt. Col. Felix Gedney rides through the Panjshir Province on June 30 in the Hindu Kush mountain passes toward Tajikistan.**



# *Freedom Watch*

*July 17, 2006*



Army Sgt. Russell Durgin's combat boots, weapon, dog tags and a photo of him was setup to honor him during a memorial ceremony June 21 at Jalalabad Airfield. Durgin died from wounds suffered during an enemy engagement in Kunar Province. Photo by Army Spc. Hollie Chapman